

Faculty Work Comprehensive List

2006

Henry Ford and the Cultural Mandate: Employees as Image Bearers and Other New Realities for Biblically Obedient Management Practices

Erik Hoekstra
Dordt College, erik.hoekstra@dordt.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), [Human Resources Management Commons](#), and the [Organizational Behavior and Theory Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hoekstra, E. (2006). Henry Ford and the Cultural Mandate: Employees as Image Bearers and Other New Realities for Biblically Obedient Management Practices. In Civil Society: East & West. IAPCHE Conference Proceedings. Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press.

This Conference Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Collections @ Dordt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Work Comprehensive List by an authorized administrator of Digital Collections @ Dordt. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

Henry Ford and the Cultural Mandate: Employees as Image Bearers and Other New Realities for Biblically Obedient Management Practices

Abstract

Presentation from the regional conference for Europe of the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE) in August 2005, hosted by St. Andrew's Biblical Theological Institute in Moscow, Russia.

Keywords

Christianity, management, employees

Disciplines

Business | Christianity | Human Resources Management | Organizational Behavior and Theory

Henry Ford and the Cultural Mandate:
Employees as Image Bearers and Other New Realities
For Biblically Obedient Management Practices

Erik Hoekstra, Ph.D.
President
Harbor Consulting Group

www.harborcg.com

....I have no doubt that the conformist standard of practice which has worked in large organizations absolutely needs modification and revision. We'll have to find a better way of permitting people to be individualistic in an organization.....we've got to face it
(Maslow 1998 p. 53)

While for progressive thinking management practitioners, the above quote may seem blasé; for many in the field of business management, breaking away from a conformist model is extremely difficult. While Abraham Maslow saw this clearly in 1962¹, most organizations still don't see the need to consider their employees as whole persons. One explanation for this shortsightedness is that the origins of management practice are grounded in the conformist model made popular during the rise of the industrial corporation under the "Scientific Management" movement of Frederick Taylor. Human resource departments were first put into place to assist companies in making workers conform, and much of early management thinking involved time-and-motion studies and other conformist tools. While some progressive companies have embraced allowing employees individual freedom in their work, many have resisted becoming enlightened in their organizational structures and individual work design. This resistance, paired with changes in demographic and economic conditions no longer sympathetic to traditional industrial-age practices, has combined to hold back personal and organizational performance. Further, these conformist practices cut against a Biblical understanding of persons as holistic image bearers of God.

Permitting employees a degree of control or "say so" in their work, providing regular performance standards and updates, and celebrating good performance with compensation and appropriate rewards is central to effective performance (Stack 1992). In Designing and Improving Knowledge Work, McDermott (1995) set forth 10 principles for organizations desiring to more intentionally deal with the issue of management in a knowledge-based economy. His

¹ Although the citation is 1998, Maslow wrote these words first in 1962 during a summer he spent studying work group interaction at Non-Linear Systems, a manufacturing company in California. His journal notes from that summer first appeared in print under the name *Euphyschian Management*, and were known mainly to academics and business theorists. They were republished in 1998 under the title, *Maslow on Management*.

principles center on the themes of connecting people more intentionally to the work they are doing and giving them a personal involvement in their work. While McDermott's principles are interesting and on target (see appendix A), he focuses primarily on what he calls "professional" occupations or organizations. His premise is that "professionals" (by his definition - scientists, doctors, engineers, teachers, accountants, and salespeople) do their work primarily from a knowledge base, thus organization of how the work is to be accomplished should be radically different from organization in a factory or more "manual" labor environment. While his principles are certainly helpful, it would appear, however, that workers at all levels of organizational life and in all types of job functions should benefit from McDermott's principles. What today's workers, whether lawyers or mechanics, are looking for in organizational life make McDermott's principles applicable not only to "professional" organizations, but to every organization interested in hiring and engaging the whole person. All organizations interested in teasing out workers' knowledge capacity and tapping into the human performance potential of their workforce to improve organizational effectiveness should heed his advice.

Human capital, knowledge work, an information society - all of these buzzwords point to a sea change in organizational life. No longer are "professional" jobs the only ones that need concern themselves with workers' minds. All work is becoming knowledge-based work. The knowledge-based economy is becoming so pervasive that some progressive companies, including Sweden's Skandia², are listing human capital as an asset on their so-called *New Balance Sheets* in annual reports to shareholders (Maitra 1998). To survive in a global knowledge-based economy, all organizations, both professional and otherwise, will need to tap into and nurture the knowledge capabilities and deeper needs of their workforce to remain competitive. Very few today need convincing that this global knowledge-based economy exists; rather taking that as given, it is important to point out that in today's knowledge-based work environment, employees want to and

² Since 1991, Skandia has been reporting Intellectual Capital (a hybrid of human & structural capital) to their shareholders in their annual report.

indeed must be treated differently, and more holistically than they have been in the past.

One attribute of a civil society in today's world is a thriving business and commercial segment of the society. The economic engine, among other segments, is a powerful force for the stable environment necessary for a civil society. Further, the other conditions for a civil society—sources of capital as John Visser (2005) terms them, social, physical, intellectual/emotional, spiritual/moral, environmental, governmental—create an environment conducive and supportive of economic progress. Obedient development of each of these macro-level sources of capital is critical to a flourishing civil society. Economic Capital is but one of the foundational aspects of civil society.

As Christians interested in civil society, it is also important for us to consider the micro-level conditions for the development of economic capital within our companies, organizations, and enterprises. Certainly, we must be concerned with the wider implications and infrastructure specific aspects of civil society. However, as we teach future generations of business leaders, we must consider what obedient management looks like within the firm, as well. Economic Capital at the macro level is, from one vantage point, nothing more than the sum total of the economic activity of all firms within a society. Thus, as Christians struggling with the formation of civil society, we must consider the implications a Christian worldview should have at the micro-level of economic capital formation, upon managerial practice within our organizations.

A growing body of research and writing is beginning to delve into these worldview issues within the organizational context. The “Faith at Work” movement (Miller, 2005) is an indication of this growing dialogue. Faith at Work is a loose network of individuals and groups driven by a quest to integrate faith and work, rejecting the systems and structures that lead to compartmentalized and fractured lives. Simultaneous to this movement, a non-religious groundswell has been investigating how past reductionist managerial practices have hurt organizational performance and how taking account of the whole person is not only enlightened, but also has powerful performance-enhancing potential in today's world.

This paper sketches a brief history of the rise of the personnel department as the primary driver behind the reductionist/conformist management movement and moves from that history to consider several recent developments—social, demographic, and competitive—which point towards the need for a new managerial direction at the micro-level of the firm. Such practice, taking account of the employee in a holistic manner, provides the basis for which the economic capital needed for civil society can grow, develop, and flourish.

For business practitioners and educators seeking to build a Biblically informed worldview of management and an obedient, normative set of principles for effective leadership, several new approaches are suggested here. First, we must understand employees as image bearers of God and take seriously the attendant implications of such image-bearing for organizational life. Second, we need to embrace the concepts of organizational trust as a workplace construct that not only is Biblically obedient, but also is showing itself to be highly correlated with employee engagement and strong financial performance within the construct provided by the “Great Place to Work” movement. Third, we must work to understand and support the relationship value of managerial trust between an employee and his/her direct supervisor and how the intimacy of that relationship either builds up or breaks down both individual and work group performance. Fourth, we should support the growing wider phenomenon within organizational practice of a new openness to spirituality in the workplace based upon the need to consider the ‘whole’ employee—hands, heart, mind, and soul.

Each of these four approaches are informative for Christians, both academics and practitioners, as we seek jointly to understand the place of economic life before the face of God and how to practice that economic life as responsible, obedient, and faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to us in the creation.

Foundations of Human Resource Practice

To understand why traditional management practice is based on conformity and control, it is helpful to sketch the history of the human resource function as an organizational reality. At

least one source (Caudron and Laabs 1997) cites the beginnings of the modern era of HR practice to 1915, just after the outbreak of WWI. Disgruntled workers, sick of the foremen acting as Lord of the Manor, hiring and firing with impunity, were looking for a better day. Tired of long hours, poor conditions, and low wages, workers faced a bleak future. Unions and collective bargaining seemed to be the ticket to the Promised Land, and management in response created the personnel function. Nicholas Lichtenstein, professor of labor and business history at the University of Virginia at Charlottesville states, “Personnel came about because of a crisis, because of this, from its earliest days, personnel was the door management knocked on when there was a problem to solve.” (Caudron and Laabs, 1997, p. 73) Beyond the historical setting, it is insightful to note that personnel and management are distinguished from each other in Professor Lichtenstein’s historical analysis.

Early personnel (as it was known in most companies until rather recently) staffs consisted of teachers, social workers, ministers, and early business school graduates. Their stated function was to quiet labor unrest and instill conformity by systematizing the hiring, managing, and compensating workers. In the early days, performance management was relatively unknown beyond the numerical production tally by the foreman each day. During WWI and WWII, personnel was given additional challenges to staff booming companies during periods of ultra-low unemployment. By 1920, the need for, or the popularity of the personnel function had grown such that in companies employing over 250 workers, 25% had personnel departments.

The primary mission given to personnel departments was *control* of the workforce. Management wanted a steady, quiet, obedient, and strong workforce to staff the growing manufacturing base. To carry this out, personnel departments created specialized recruitment tools, pension and health plans, communication programs to reduce union power, and supervisor training programs. However, almost without exception all programs developed in the personnel era were put in place to avoid staffing crises and keep employees relatively happy and silent. Conformity was the name of the game.

While both union power and the need for a strong personnel department were lessened in the period following WWI through the Great Depression, the rapid industrial growth spurred new union activity and, in turn, a new focus on the personnel function in most companies. While both of these trends continue more or less through to today, the practice of personnel or HRM (Human Resource Management) continues to evolve. The 1950's brought plentiful jobs and employment for life, and HRM sprang into the field of supervisor training and employee relations. The 1960's saw the beginnings of participative management techniques like Management by Objectives and the move away from seniority-based pay to merit-based pay. The 1970's brought much employment legislation, from OSHA to Civil Rights, and HRM moved more fully into the integration of such legal requirements into the working life of the organization. The recession of the 1980's taught HRM to outpace and re-train workers, and management called on HRM to assist in the restructuring of economically unsound companies. However, throughout the decades, HR departments have continuously struggled with shaking off the vestiges of their beginnings, a department that management asked to produce conformity in the workforce and that management called on in moments of "people crisis."

Employees Have Changed and Are Now Volunteers

Why do people go to work? Up until the early 1980's the answer to this question was an easy one. To pay the bills. A popular bumper sticker, playing a pun on the Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, "I owe, I owe, it's off to work I go," hints at the basic physiological needs that motivate people at a base level to get and keep a job. However, given the fact that in most developed economies, today's manufacturing salaries go far beyond meeting people's basic needs for food, housing, and transportation, the "to pay the bills" reasoning for going to work leaves out a large part of the equation.

People seek community in their work. Workers are looking for higher order needs in their work. When the modern corporation came into being, America was moving from a subsistence level agrarian society to a subsistence level industrial society. In 2000, our economic and

commercial realities are far removed from the early days of industrialization and subsistence. A helpful metaphor to describe many workers today is “volunteer.” While consideration of these “employee-as-volunteer” principles in developing economies may not be as precisely “on-point” as it is within more developed economies, it certainly is the case that many of the destructive conformist/reductionist practices and principles of early industrial-age management need not be repeated as these economies develop and grow. In fact, a case could be made that the adoption of “employee-as-volunteer” managerial practices within developing countries early on may increase their relative competitiveness and the pace of economic development.

This “volunteer” trend was seen most keenly perhaps during the go-go halcyon days of the 1990’s in the U.S. high-tech heaven, aptly termed Silicon Valley (Meyer 1998). Here, it was said (with more than a grain of truth) that people were employees of Silicon Valley, Inc. and simply parked their cars at various companies. This statement hints not only to the high level of mobility that many workers enjoyed and often exploited, but also to the sharing of information that was allowed and often encouraged between workers in different companies. While the dot-com bust in the first years of the new century may have lessened this phenomenon somewhat, much of this push to see workers, particularly knowledge workers, differently continues today and has even extended into the mainstream of much of economic life, particularly in the United States.

In the Valley and in forward-thinking companies elsewhere, employers know that workers are really “volunteers,” and motivation for volunteers is far more than monetary compensation. What motivates workers to park their cars at a particular office of Silicon Valley, Inc. is the chance to work on interesting projects, to develop professionally, and to be recognized by peers. As Sherri Rose, former director of Apple Computer’s training and development program says,

Once people have a sense of security, once they are no longer hungry, all they want to do, no matter what job or level, is to learn and grow. The pace of change and work is frantic and a common denominator which I’ve found with employees in this Valley is their inherent need to be challenged and to grow. When the core financial step has been taken care of, the biggest challenge is to continually keep employees’ personal interests, their need for growth, aligned with the needs of the company (Maslow 1998 p. 57)

It is important to note that the concept of a “volunteer workforce” and the need for professional development and alignment of personal interests and corporate values is not only applicable in high-tech. With demographic trends indicating a severe shortage of workers in most countries and with many workers meeting their basic monetary needs in 20 or fewer hours per week, companies need to realize that a key factor potential future employees are looking for is a deeper spiritual and more holistic connection to their work. Indeed, in every industry and in every hamlet, the new knowledge-based model for management and HRD must embrace the worker holistically and seek to create a work environment where shared knowledge, innovative work, and allowance for individuality are the norm. Companies seeking to develop world class, high performance workers must abandon the WE-THEY management of workers. Participation and partnership need to replace command and control as the primary modus operandi in firms hoping to remain alive in the new knowledge-based economy. In short, workers seek to be viewed as “professional partners” (Meyer 1998, p. 125). While in 1995, McDermott recognized the need for enlightened practice in professional organizations, today not only professional service firms but all organizations need to embrace the reality of knowledge work and human capital as source of long-term sustainable competitive advantage.

Changing Demographics of the Workforce

A second reason that today’s workers seek a deeper spiritual connection to their work and want a relationship with their employer based on trust is the changing demographics of the workforce. The conformity and controlling management of workers described above was appropriate for early industrial growth in the United States. The mindset of most workers during the period 1940 - 1970 was based in a substantial way on the events of WWI, WWII, and the Great Depression. Further, many of the workers during this period were either immigrants themselves or had parents who were immigrants. Whether immigrants or not, many previously counted on subsistence agriculture, wrought with cycles of drought and bounty, for survival. Both the war and depression events combined with the immigrant and post-agrarian lifestyle

created a worker that viewed his new industrial job with gratefulness. They were pleased to “owe their soul to the company store,” and in exchange for a guarantee of regular pay and were willing to work without asking the “why” question. They simply accepted the rules of the game as put forth by management and wouldn’t have thought about the need for having a spiritual connection to their work. Following Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, a job for these workers served a physiological, or at best a safety need for these workers. The psychological events of the depression, the agrarian shift, and immigration combined to create a class of workers ideally suited for the conformity and mechanistic nature of management in the industrial growth period of 1940 - 1970.

The three primary groups populating corporations today are the Baby Boomers (ages 40 - 60) in many upper and middle management positions, the Generation X’ers (ages 25-40) in many entry level and middle management positions, and The Echo Generation (younger than 25) just entering the workforce in large numbers. All of these groups, in different ways and for different reasons, want something different from their jobs than did their parents and grandparents, members of the Silent Generation (ages 60-80). For members of these three dominant demographic groups, the mechanistic model of organizational life with its mindset of conformity falls short of providing what they are looking for in their work. Thus, companies seeking to leverage their human capital will attempt to look inside these groups’ heads to figure out what makes them tick.

For many years The Boomers were willing to go along with the old rules of organizational life. They too were influenced, although secondarily, by many of the same economic and psychological events as their parents. However, these same Boomers, who grew up in the idealistic 1960’s, are now reaching middle age or the second stage of their lives. As Judith Neal (1997) points out,

It's almost as if a large segment of the population is having a shared mid-life crisis. Many are looking at their lives and are calculating the time they have left. They ask themselves questions that are essentially spiritual questions: "What do I want to do with the rest of my life? What is my purpose? What is my true work? Have I accomplished what I set out to do?" These questions have implications for the type of work a person does, how he or she feels about the organization and its products and services, and how one balances work, family, community, and spiritual needs. (p. 121)

This mid-life crisis is changing what Boomers expect from the companies for which they work. This crisis also changes the rules of work for them. No longer are they willing to "work like dogs" without having many of their higher level needs met by their work community. On the monetary side, many Boomers are financially set, having worked through the post-war boom years in American industry. For them, social security will still be solvent, their pensions, 401(k)'s, IRA's are fully funded, and their present salaries are far and away enough to pay the bills. They simply want more from work.

The group coming into power in organizations, Generation X, is similar to their Boomer parents, in wanting more from their work. It seems as if they already went through their mid-life crisis before ever coming to work. However, they want more for very different reasons than the Boomers. Their wars are of the Cold and Gulf variety—mainly on TV, instead of the brutal realities of WWI and WWII of their grandparents. They grew up during a period of extreme U.S. economic dominance and have always had more than enough "stuff" to meet their material needs. Thus, GenX'ers don't know and don't care that any job is a great thing to have. If the job doesn't meet their deeper existential needs, they aren't interested. To be engaged in their work, GenX'ers need to be able to say, "The company I work for is cool, they take my ideas into account, I'm appreciated as a real person there."

Finally, the Echo Generation, representing 73 million persons in the United States, have similar needs for a "whole life" as do the Gen Xer's. However, their desire for a complete life stems from their desire to have a genuine experience, custom-made and custom-fit to their own individual needs and desires. Their extreme exposure to the internet and other information

technology has formed them to demand information, and they simply will not conform or perform if asked to give their hands to their work and leave their heads at home. They must be intellectually engaged in their work and involved in the process of bringing about the future of the enterprise.

Whatever the reasons, all of these groups comprise the bulk of the future workforce and all are calling for a deeper sense of belonging and connectedness to their work. They want to trust the companies they work for and are longing for a spiritual connection to the work they do. They're volunteers, and if you don't connect with them with trust and allow space for their deeper spiritual needs and desires to have a holistic connection to their work, they simply will not engage deeply in their work.

The Changing Work Contract

In September of 1945, Thomas Watson Sr., the founder of IBM, announced the first retirement plan in the company's history with these words,

Worry is just the worst thing that anyone can have. I want to tell you that I consider it my foremost duty in IBM...to do everything we can do to keep you people from worrying—not only after you retire, but while you are working. Now I do not see any reason why any worthy employee should worry about his job with IBM. (Horton & Reid 1991 p. vii)

Watson's sentiment was typical of the "contract" of lifetime employment that existed in many firms at the time. Whether explicit or implicit, this contract was in place for many workers. The conditions of the contract were simple—work hard, keep your nose clean, and you've got a job for life. Not everything was good about the old unwritten contract—it was often paternalistic and dictatorial. But it fostered the kind of employee dedication and commitment that too often doesn't exist in companies today.

Watson's words ring unfortunately hollow with many workers at Scott Paper and Sunbeam Corp., former employers of "Chainsaw" Al Dunlap. "Chainsaw Al" was the darling of Wall Street CEO who pushed both companies' stock prices through the roof with downsizing and restructuring, cutting thousands of jobs in the process. Restructuring, headcount rightsizing,

reductions-in-force, and other euphemisms for cutting human beings are very common headlines in the business news and very popular memo topics in many firms today. Reasons for such events are myriad, from poor planning to stock price manipulation to global competition. However, the question relevant for this paper is not the reasons behind the action, but the outcomes of the action on workers and for human resource professionals.

The bottom line of this activity is the breaking of trust between workers and companies. The solid commitment, dedication, and trust fostered by the old “contract” is gone, just at the moment that the volunteer workforce of Boomers, GenX’ers, and Echos are looking for more trust and a stronger sense of connection to their work. Even before the time of “Chainsaw AI,” Maslow (1998) saw the utter folly and destructive nature of this short-term thinking,

But I am told that this is very easy to do in any business situation—that it is easy to show a profit for a particular short period by using up assets, buy not building for the future, by throwing away all sorts of human assets which are not counted by the accountants—loyalties, good attitudes toward the supervisors and toward the managers and the like. ...For any business that wants to last for a century, this is suicidal. (p. 248)

While no worker today can expect, nor may want a contract for life, workers are looking for stability and a sense of belonging. If companies truly desire to leverage the human capital within their organizations, they must take all of these new realities into account in practice.

If we believe each of the above new realities; that management practice has a conformist, mechanistic history, that today’s workers are really a new breed of volunteers, that the old work “contract” is gone, and that corporate upheaval is here to stay, we need to look for new managerial practices to keep pace with these changes. Additionally, we, as Christian management thinkers and business people, need to consider the implications of these new realities within the framework of a Biblically informed worldview.

Employees as Image Bearers

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.....God saw all that he had made and it was very good. Genesis 1:27-31

While it is certainly understandable for the personnel departments of the early industrial age companies to have compartmentalized work along the lines of Frederick Taylor's "scientific management" philosophy, the time to view employees beyond this mechanistic manner is long overdue. As Christians, our management philosophy must push against the dominant "command and control" worldview of the secular world and embrace the "employee as image-bearer" worldview. As image bearer, the employee is a whole person—hands, mind, heart, and soul—and as such, employees must be allowed to express all of these attributes in their jobs and within their work experience. Not only is it ineffective to continue to think of employees as Henry Ford did—"Why is it that I always get the whole person when all I want is a good pair of hands?," but it is also sinful and antagonistic to a normative view of work.

A Christian worldview of work and management must embrace the image-bearer nature of employees and offer a workplace of involvement, engagement, and belonging. For Christians, it should come as little surprise that the wider cultural forces of Gen X and the Echo Generation have employees seeking deeper meaning and more extensive involvement in their work—these strivings are created by God and are simply finding expression at this time in economic history with the confluence of present day competitive, cultural, social, and workplace changes.

As image bearers within the cultural mandate of God to be fruitful and multiply, employees are seeking the need to find a relational context to their Creator through their own individual calling. Certainly, the concept of calling is much more inclusive and broader than the

concept of employment. However, given the percentage of time spent on one's "work," the concept of calling certainly must take into account one's occupation/work/job. The etymology of "work" is insightful in this context. There are at least three Latin roots for one's work, *laborem* (labor)—a sweaty, exertion of the body related to toil, pain, and fatigue, *operari* (opus)—to produce in abundance by being active in exertion, and *urgere* (urge, work)—to drive, press hard, push or compel. Beyond these three, another term related to work 'task' has etymological roots from the Latin *taxere*—an evaluative assessment sense or a piece of work imposed as a duty. In the last 150 years in the Western industrial context, we have centered our idea and conceptualization of our economic sense of calling around the terms labor, task, and work, and relegated the term opus to only the artistic—both visual, literary, and musical pursuits.

We would do well as Christians to elevate our organizational structures, job designs, and worldviews towards our employees to focus more intentionally on the sense of opus that our employees receive from their jobs rather than the labor, task, or work phraseology that has been our mainstay to date. One's fulfillment of the cultural mandate or calling should be far more than only toil, sweat, pushing, compelling, driving, and imposition. We must open ourselves and our organizations up to see more fully what image bearers can do and should do within our organizations as they find their individual place before the face of God as reflective image-bearers of their Lord.

Managerial Intimacy and Trust

One of the factors that built the trust of workers during the industrial growth period in the U.S. was the small size of many firms. While IBM was large at the time of Thomas Watson Sr.'s pension announcement cited earlier, by comparison with firms today, IBM was tiny. Max DePree (1989) places intimacy at the center of a strong working relationship,

Intimacy is at the heart of competence. It has to do with understanding, with believing, and with practice. It has to do with the relationship to one's work. ...We should be concerned with intimacy when we design the organizational structures which, after all, are the road maps that help us work together. Intimacy concerns us personally, professionally, and organizationally. (p. 45, 47)

The intimacy and connectedness that employees felt with the companies for which they worked under the old "contract" was intense. In today's corporations, the enormity of the organization creates difficulty for employees as they seek to connect with the company. It's a bit like attending large mega-church; people don't feel as connected to the place if no one knows them by name.

Gilley (1998) recognizes this problem and suggests that it's up to individual managers to build individual synergistic relationships with employees based on a coaching paradigm. He suggests that overall company performance is a function of individual managerial performance and that managers are the primary connection to improve employee motivation and satisfaction. Most importantly, in a world of gigantic organizations and the non-humanness of organizational life, he suggests that:

Managers mediate and translate organizational policies and procedures for employees while developing work climates conducive for improving productivity and quality. They help employees to maneuver through the organizational maze and to develop an appreciation and understanding of the organization's culture. In short, managers are the only "leadership" most employees ever interact with during their tenure in an organization. (Gilley 1998, p. 145)

Thus, to help replace the old "contract" relationship with employees in the new world of work, the individual manager must take on the responsibility for building a relationship with each and every employee. Gilley (1999) calls this type of relationship "synergistic" (p. 7) while DePree (1989) calls this type of relationship a "covenant" (p. 25). Whatever one calls it, it seems clear that if employees are to "buy-in" and make a connection to a

company in today's environment, direct and personal contact by their manager is key to that buy-in.

Research from the Gallup Organization (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999) indicates clearly that direct managerial influence has a significant impact on the performance of both individuals and organizations. It is instructive that even within the same organizations, performance levels of departments and individuals differ greatly—which supports the manager-as-mediator theory above. Further, what this research indicates is that the performance differences can be traced back clearly to a simple list of 12 statements that the employees of great managers can answer affirmatively while employees of less effective managers are not able to do so. When one considers these 12 simple statements (Appendix B) and considers the content of the statements in light of image-bearing, opus, demographic changes, knowledge work, and the impact of the individual manager on performance, the glaring simplicity of the statements as well as the powerful implications are immediately evident as we look for more effective, and more obedient forms of managerial practice.

For these intimate, synergistic manager-employee relationships to form, three key factors must be put in place in organizations. First, a new breed of manager must be selected. Traditionally, management people rose through the ranks because they were technically proficient. As a result, many employees were promoted to be managers who were wrong for the role. They ended up being either ineffectual or down right destructive. Today's manager must be selected not for technical skills, but for relationship building skills often called emotional intelligence (Cherniss, 2005) (communication, building self-esteem, mentoring, teaching) and for strategic thinking skills (analytic, visionary, out-of-

the-box approaches). Second, what managers are expected to do needs to jibe with the actual culture of the organization. Too often, managers are asked to get results through people or told that people are the heart of the organization, when in reality the policies, procedures, and practices of the organization don't align with the language—the audio just doesn't match the video. Third, companies must reward managers for building these synergistic, coaching relationships with their subordinates. Again, what companies say they want and what gets rewarded are sadly two completely different realities. If companies are serious about their human talent and recognize that managers are the keys to unlocking that talent, managers must be selected, developed, and rewarded toward getting results through people.

Building Blocks of Organizational Trust

A second tool that companies can use to build commitment and “buy-in” from an increasingly diverse and sometimes rightly skittish workforce is to champion the concept of fair process throughout the process of organizational decision making. Though a surprisingly simple and common sense concept, as well as a Biblically normative one, fair process is far too often absent when decisions are made that affect people's work lives. Fair process is fairness in the way a company makes and executes decisions. The three elements of fair process are simple: 1) Engage people's input in decisions that directly affect them, 2) Explain why decisions are made the way they are, 3) Make clear what will be expected of employees after the changes are made (Kim & Mauborgne 1997). If fair process is not followed, employees tend to become paranoid about the decision-making process. As this paranoia grows, they begin to worry about the next decision to come, whether they will be informed, involved, or ambushed.

Given the economic realities that companies face and the psychological needs of workers described above, it is obvious how the lack of fair process in organizational decision-making can be fatal in a knowledge-based job function. If decisions are made without input, explanation, or expectations, employees live in a constant state of fear, potentially for their jobs. In such a state, knowledge sharing shuts down within work groups and competition between people, teams, or divisions, hampers performance. To create a climate in which employees freely offer their creativity and expertise, managers need to build trust by making decisions in a transparent way, so that all people affected are clear, informed, and involved. If not, work climate can be negatively impacted, and the questions of “Why do I put up with this?” begin to surface in a workforce that is increasingly seeking to be connected to their work. This is a natural response based on a real human need. All workers, whatever their roles in the company, want to be valued as human beings. They want to understand the rationale behind specific decisions. People are sensitive to the signals conveyed through a company’s decision-making process. Such processes can reveal a company’s willingness to trust people and to seek their ideas, or they can signal the opposite.

The earlier cited concept of employees as “volunteers” is particularly important and relevant here. If a work climate is negative as it relates to decision-making involvement or fair process, some workers will head for the door. Who goes first? Usually the best and the brightest. Those with the most to contribute to the company certainly have the greatest number of employment options. If firms don’t engage them in decision making, they’ll be the first grabbed up by competitor, leaving the average performers wondering what decision will be handed down next. Solicit the star

performers' suggestions, involve them in decision-making, align their decision making ideals and criteria with company goals through clear explanation, and they have no reason to look around.

DePree (1989) makes an important cautionary point about fair process. "Everyone has the right and the duty to influence decision-making and understand the results. ...(but it) is not democratic. Having a say differs from having a vote." (p. 23). While supporting fair process fully, companies need to be sure that employees don't equate a "say" with a "vote." Such clarity of roles, rights, and responsibilities is crucial in making effective and efficient decisions.

Extending beyond fair process, the Great Place to Work Institute has been investigating the connection between organizational trust and performance for many years. Both Levering (2004) and Lyman (2003), founders of the Institute conceptualize a great place to work as one in which there exists a high degree of trust between the employees and management. For them, the building blocks of such trust are credibility, respect, and fairness, which combine with pride of work (*opus*?) and camaraderie (GenX, Echo?) to fill out the Great Place to Work model of the qualities of great workplaces (see Appendix C).

Some managerial practitioners and scholars, particularly those of a Christian worldview, may intuitively see the connection between these workplace attributes and high levels of organizational performance due to the Biblically normative nature of these attributes. This becomes all the more clear when these workplace attributes are juxtaposed with the reductionist/conformist workplace attributes of early management practice that continue to have so much power and influence in too many organizations still today.

However, we need not hinge our managerial practices on intuition alone.

Extensive research conducted on the companies included in the Great Place to Work companies has found repeatedly (Lau & May, 1998; Filbeck & Preece, 2003, Fulmer, Gerhart, & Scott, 2003) that the financial performance of these firms significantly outpaces other competitive firms and the broader markets. This finding is exciting. First, for anyone interested in increasing organizational performance, this research provides a simple roadmap or recipe for improvement. Second, for Christians involved in management, these findings are validation of the normative and foundational role that a Biblical worldview has upon organizational realities. God is alive and well, and if we put forth organizational policies, procedures, and systems that are in tune with Biblical norms, we get not only the knowledge and freedom of conscience that implementing such practices provide, we also get outstanding organizational performance!

Rekindling of the Spirit at Work

A surprising response by many workers to the new realities of the modern workplace has been the re-introduction of “spirituality” into the vocabulary of the office. This phenomenon seems to be a bubbling from the bottom up in organizational life, rather than a top-down management fad or corporate performance strategy. Business and religious researchers have begun to study the place of spirituality in organizational life and recently the Eighth International Symposium on Spirituality and Business was held in Boston. Again, way ahead of the curve, Maslow (1998) reflected:

Enlightened management is one way of taking religion seriously, profoundly, deeply, earnestly. Of course, for those who define religion just as going to a particular building on Sunday and hearing a particular kind of formula repeated, this is all irrelevant. But for those who define religion in terms of deep concern with the problems of human beings, with the problems of ethics, of the future of man, then this kind of philosophy, translated into the work life, turns out to be very much like the new style of management and of organization (p. 83).

Maslow's comments seem to ring true with most of the spirituality speak going on in companies. It seems people are looking for that deeper connection to their work and work communities, and are finding expression through words normally reserved for religious experiences.

While it would be difficult to find tight connections with traditional organized religion, the power of this concept is hard to ignore. Conger (1994) believes that part of the increased focus on spirituality in the workplace is due to the declining relevance of traditional religion as an avenue for finding deeper meaning. Thus, as traditional religion has declined, peoples' search for meaning and connection has been transferred to a place where they come into community with others for extended periods of time on a regular basis, the workplace.

However, the type, variety, and level of organizational commitment to such new programs is widely divergent. Some firms simply allow workers leeway to express religious and/or spiritual freedom within the workplace; other employers actively promote conferences, speakers, time off, and group meditation. (Laabs 1995). Extreme examples include regular periods of transcendental meditation or on payroll Bible studies. While still in its infancy, it appears to be a movement that meets a real need with increasingly stressed workers suffering the downsizing blues and looking for ways to connect their work to a wider purpose. At the heart of the matter seems to be a reflective element that

suggests that in process of building tremendous material prosperity, this country has ignored the “soul” side of the person. Instead of quitting work en masse and becoming monks, people are realizing that a coherence can exist between work and the soul. Briskin (1996) says it this way:

I am suggesting that the soul mediates between spiritual awareness and material betterment. We cannot pursue prosperity at the cost of the whole person or the whole community. We must transcend the labor-as-commodity, labor-as-soul duality because it has fostered an unworkable agreement. Workers simply cannot pay the “rent” expected of them without violating their connection to family, community, personal health, and spiritual longing (p. 157-158).

Given the situation that Boomers, GenX’ers, and the Echo Generation members find themselves in, it is clear that words and concepts such as these resonate in the workplace. Obedient management practitioners would do well to monitor the spiritual temperature in their workplaces and encourage breaking down the duality between work and spirit. It may make for happy workers and increased performance. In other words, it could be that such a movement could do right by doing the right thing. Practicing management that is open to the reconnection of work and spirit brings back together the created order that God intended and removes the harmful duality imposed by the reductionism of past management practice.

Conclusion

The key to managing a changing workforce in a changing work world is figuring out how to keep those willing workers eager over the long haul and how to leverage human capital for strategic, sustainable, competitive advantage. Further, Christian business people and Christian business academics need to be informed and interested in how the changing workforce and the changing work world should be managed in accordance with Biblical obedience.

I believe the four practices put forth in this paper (Integrating Employee as Image-Bearer, Building Managerial Intimacy and Trust, Building Organizational Trust, and

Encouraging/Allowing for Spirituality at Work) provide at least a beginning step towards doing just that. In addition, these four practices begin to move managerial practice closer to a Biblically informed, normative expression of organizational life. Finally, I have shown that with each of these practices, not only is God honored and glorified, but also organizational performance will likely be increased.

Douglas McGregor (1960) put forth the Theory X/Theory Y paradigm as a step towards realizing our own shortcomings as managers. Simply stated, through research McGregor felt that Theory Y management would allow for creativity and innovation to flourish in organizational settings, exactly the kind of flourishing that companies competing in the knowledge-based economy today need so badly. McGregor felt it came down to answering a few simple questions:

1. Do you believe that people are trustworthy?
2. Do you believe that people seek responsibility and accountability?
3. Do you believe that people seek meaning in their work?
4. Do you believe that people naturally want to learn?
5. Do you believe that people don't resist change, but they resist being changed?
6. Do you believe that people prefer work to being idle?

A company's answers to these questions affect everything else it does. For managers to do their jobs well, these fundamental questions must be answered as a part of a corporate mission statement. Answers to these questions are key to aligning managerial practice with organizational cultural norms. To best align company norms with worker attitudes in today's competitive climate, firms would do well to answer yes to all of the above.

Finally, for those interested and committed to designing organizations that are both Biblically informed and high performing, a message of encouragement from the Pope:

The purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a community of persons who in various ways are endeavoring to satisfy their basic needs and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society. Profit is a regulator of the life of a business, but it is not the only one; other human and moral factors must also be considered, which in the long term are at least equally important for the life of a business.

—Pope J. Paul II in “The Hundredth Year: An Essay”

If we begin to understand our business practice from this perspective, putting profit of an enterprise in its appropriate context and paying appropriate attention to these other human and moral factors, we will begin to understand and live out our calling as Christian businesspersons. It is also likely that in doing so profit will be available in substantial enough measure to carry our firms forward.

References

- Briskin, A. (1996). The Stirring of Soul in the Workplace. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Buckingham, M, and Coffman, C. (1999). First, Break All the Rules. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Caudron, S. and Laabs J.J. (January, 1997). It's Taken 75 Years to Say, Here's to You! Evolution of Human Resource Management. Workforce. 76(1).
- Cherniss, C. (2005). The Business Case for Emotional Intelligence. Retrieved from http://www.eiconsortium.org/research/business_case_for_ei.pdf
- Conger, J. (1994). Our Search for Spiritual Community. In Jay Conger & Associates, Spirit at Work. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- DePree, M. (1989). Leadership is an Art. New York: Doubleday.
- Filbeck, G. and Preece, D. (2003). Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work for in America: Do they work for shareholders? Journal of Business Finance and Accounting, 30(5/6).
- Fulmer, I. S., Gerhart, B., and Scott, K.S. (2003). Are the Best Better? An Empirical Investigation of the relationship between being a "Great Place to Work" and firm performance. Personnel Psychology, 56.
- Gilley, J.W. (1998). Strategically Integrated HRD. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.
- Gilley, J.W. (1999). The Performance Challenge. Reading, MA: Perseus Books.
- Horton, T.R. and Reid, P.C. (1991). Beyond the Trust Gap: Forging a New Partnership Between Managers and Their Employers. Homewood, IL: Irwin.
- Kim, W.C. and Mauborgne R. (July/August 1997). Fair Process: Managing in the Knowledge Economy. Harvard Business Review.
- Laabs, J.J. (September 1995). Balancing Spirituality and Work. Personnel Journal. 9(60).
- Lau, R.S.M. and May, B.E. (1998). A Win-Win Paradigm for Quality of Work Life and Business Performance, Human Resource Development Quarterly, 9(3).

- Levering, R. (August, 2004). Creating a great place to work: Why it is important and how it is done. Corrections Today.
- Lyman, A. (2003). Building trust in the workplace. Strategic HR Review, 3(1).
- Maitra, D. (October, 1998). The New Annual Report. Business Today.
- Maslow, A. H. (1998). Maslow on Management. New York: Wiley.
- McGregor, D. (1960). The Human Side of Enterprise. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
- McDermott, R. (March, 1995). Designing and Improving Knowledge Work. Journal for Quality and Participation.
- Meyer, C. (1997). Relentless Growth: How Silicon Valley Innovation Strategies Can Work in Your Business. New York: Free Press, 1997.
- Miller, D. W. (2005). Religion & Business: A Christian Perspective. Ethix: The Bulletin of the Institute for Business, Technology, & Ethics. Issue 42:July/August 2005.
- Neal, J. (Feb, 1997). Spirituality in Management Education: A Guide to Resources. Journal of Management Education.
- Stack, J. (1992). The Great Game of Business. New York: Doubleday Currency.
- Visser, J. R. (2005). Worldview and Global Leadership. In R.R. Sims & S.A. Quatro (Eds.), Leadership: Succeeding in the Private, Public, and Not-for-Profit Sectors, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.

Appendix A

Richard McDermott's Ten Design Principles for Professional Work

1. Make the business process visible: Identify its output, customers, and competitive importance.
2. Make collaboration and learning explicit parts of the company's values
3. Streamline the business process and work methods
4. Identify key value-added focus areas
5. Systematize process and methods
6. Focus on innovation by building a base of shared knowledge
7. Align the organization's structure and management policies
8. Involve professionals in improving their work
9. Appreciate and utilize differences in knowledge, goals, and perspective
10. Create a mechanism for continuous learning and improvement

Appendix B

Buckingham and Coffman's 12 Questions Differentiating Great Managers' Practices

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel like my work is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone talked to me about my progress?
12. At work, have I had opportunities to learn and grow?

Appendix C

Great Place to Work Institute Construct for A Great Place to Work

A great place to work is one in which you “trust the people you work for, have pride in what you do, and enjoy the people you work with.”

1. Credibility
 - a. Communications are open and accessible
 - b. Competence in coordinating human and material resources
 - c. Integrity in carrying out vision with consistency
2. Respect
 - a. Supporting professional development and showing appreciation
 - b. Collaboration with employees on relevant decisions
 - c. Caring for employees as individuals with personal lives
3. Fairness
 - a. Equity—balanced treatment for all in terms of rewards
 - b. Impartiality—absence of favoritism in hiring and promotions
 - c. Justice—lack of discrimination and process for appeals
4. Pride
 - a. In personal job, individual contributions
 - b. In work produced by one’s team or group
 - c. In the organization’s products and standing in the community
5. Camaraderie
 - a. Ability to be oneself
 - b. Socially friendly and welcoming atmosphere
 - c. Sense of “family” or “team”

The Harbor Consulting Group

1520 N. Main, PO Box 260, Sioux Center, Iowa 51250, (712) 722-1661

Erik Hoekstra, Ph.D.

President

Erik serves as President of Harbor Consulting Group and Chief Development Officer for the Interstates Companies. His background includes leadership roles in wholesale distribution, retail management, and as Chairperson of the Business Department at Dordt College, a four-year liberal arts college in Iowa.

Desiring to see workplaces become places of realized potential, he focuses directly on organizational and people development issues. Erik regularly works with senior managers to diagnose, analyze, and provide solutions for organizational challenges across various enterprises, using primarily a 'systems thinking' approach to problem solving.

He has led the training and development effort within the operating units of Harbor Group, including the formation of Harbor University, the internal learning and growth agent for the company. In addition, he serves as an internal consultant to all the operating divisions and has participated in several successful re-organization efforts.

Erik regularly leads seminars for internal and external audiences in the areas of negotiation, constructive confrontation, performance coaching, delegation, team-building, and change process leadership.

Erik holds bachelors degrees in history and philosophy, a Master's Degree in International Management from The Rotterdam School of Management in the Netherlands, and a Ph.D. in Organizational Learning and Human Resource Development from Iowa State University. His research interests include corporate culture & performance and training transfer effectiveness.

The Harbor Consulting Group

1520 North Main
PO Box 260
Sioux Center, IA. 51250

Phone: 712-722-1661
Fax: 712-722-1667
Email: erik.hoekstra@harborcg.com

